

Hortley (P.)
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THE
WELSH FREEHOLDER'S
FAREWELL EPISTLES

TO THE
RIGHT REV. SAMUEL LORD BISHOP,
(LATELY, OF ST. DAVID'S)
NOW,
OF ROCHESTER;

IN WHICH
The Unitarian Dissenters, and the Dissenters in general,
Are vindicated from Charges advanced against them in
His Lordship's Circular Letter,
ON THE CASE OF THE EMIGRANT FRENCH CLERGY:

WITH
A COPY OF THAT LETTER.

A froward Man soweth Strife.
Who is this that darkneth Counsel by Words without Knowledge?
Dyn cyndyn a bair ymryson.
Pwy yw hwn fydd yw tywllu cyngor ag ymadroddiion heb wybodaeth?

LONDON,
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1794.



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THE PREFACE.

THE following sheets contain animadversions on a Circular Letter of Bishop Horsley, recommending the case of the emigrant Priests, and addressed to the Clergy of the Diocese of St. David's. As the animadversions may fall into hands, which the letter has not reached, it has been thought right, here, to subjoin a copy of it.

Copy of a Letter addressed to the Clergy
of the Diocese of St. David's, by the
Bishop :

" To the Rev. the Rector, Vicar or Curate of, &c.

" REVEREND BROTHER,

" I DOUBT not, that of your own accord, and without any exhortation of mine, you will be ready to exert your utmost endeavours for the promotion of the pious and charitable work, which, as you will perceive by the papers annexed, it hath pleased God to put into the heart and mind of our most gracious Sovereign. By his Majesty's letter

letter to the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, you will perceive the tenderness of his compassion and concern for our suffering brethren, the exiled clergy of the oppressed church of France; who have sought in his Majesty's dominions, in this happy land of pure religion, just government, well-ordered liberty, and equal laws, an asylum, in no other quarter to be found, from the fury of their persecutors, the inveterate, and avowed enemies of God, and of his Christ: who, having succeeded in their nefarious project, to destroy their national church, under the pretence of making room for an universal toleration, do in fact persecute every thing but atheism; and having despoiled their clergy of their chartered property, under fraudulent promises of a competent maintenance, which they had no sooner the power of fulfilling, than they in effect broke them, by imposing conditions with which conscientious men could not comply; have driven thousands of them from their friends, and their homes, into a foreign land, there to perish, as these enemies of religion have designed, by nakedness and hunger. To avert from them this miserable fate, the charity of this country, excited by the example,

ample, and at the call of our Sovereign, is, we humbly hope, the instrument ordained by providence.

“In obedience to his Majesty’s commands, and the injunctions of the metropolitan, and to promote, what we can, so excellent a work; I require of you, that on the first, second, or at the farthest on the third sunday, after you shall have received the packet in which this is enclosed, you read publicly in your church, immediately after the second lesson; first, his Majesty’s letter to the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury; secondly, his Grace’s letter to me, and lastly, this letter of mine to you. The substance, and purport of these letters you will briefly explain to your congregation in the Welsh language, if the English is not generally understood among them. This done, you will, in a suitable discourse from the pulpit, endeavour to stir up the affections of your people, by every argument which our holy religion furnishes, to alacrity, and a godly emulation in ministring, upon this occasion, to the relief of the forlorn, afflicted, famished strangers, thrown by the storm of persecution into our arms. You will re-
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mind them that the persons for whom we, in the name of God, implore their aid, however they may differ from us upon certain points of doctrine, discipline, and external rites, are nevertheless our brethren—members of Christ—children of God—heirs of the promises ; adhering indeed to the communion of the church of Rome, in which they have been educated, but more endeared to us by the example they exhibit of patient suffering for conscience sake, than estranged by what we deem their errors and corruptions. More near, and dear to us in truth by far, than some, who affecting to be called our Protestant brethren, have no other title to the name of Protestant, than a Jew or a Pagan ; who, not being a christian, is for that reason only not a Papist ; persons who professing to receive our Lord as a teacher, as the very Mahometans receive him, call in question however, what is not called in question by the Mahometans, the infallibility of his doctrine ; and under the mask of an affected zeal for civil and religious liberty, are endeavouring to propagate in this country those very notions of the sovereignty of the people, the rights of man, and an unlimited right of private judgment, in opposition

tion to ecclesiastical discipline; those treasonable and atheistic notions, which in France have wrought the total subversion of the civil, and ecclesiastical constitution, the confusion of all rights, the abolition of all property, the extinction of all religion, and the loss of all liberty to the individual, except that of blaspheming God and reviling kings. You will remind your people of the happiness we of this country, by the favor of providence enjoy, under the mild government of a monarch, whose prerogative is the bulwark of the subjects liberty, while in France, the passions of the multitude broke loose from restraint, are made the instruments of God's judgments upon the apostacy of the nation. At the same time you will not fail to admonish them that they are not always the greatest sinners, who are made the first examples of wrath.—That they were not sinners above all the Galileans, the eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell. That it becomes us, therefore, comparing ourselves with other nations, not to be high-minded, but to fear. From all these motives of gratitude to God, brotherly affection, and holy fervour, you will incite them to be earnest, and forward, in that work
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which covereth a multitude of sins, remembering always the promise of the Lord, that
“ Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward.”

“ Commending you, and your flock to God’s high, and holy protection, I remain,

“ Your loving Brother,

“ SAMUEL ST. DAVID’s.”

“ *London, May 1793.*”

THIS ghostly favour, on which I forbear to make comments in this place, the clergy received in the course of last summer. It fell not in the author’s way till some considerable time after, or the animadversions would, sooner, have made their appearance. These have swelled out into a much larger bulk than it was first intended they should. It is hoped, however, that
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little will be found in them which does not apply either to the subject, or to the times. To commit them to paper proved to the writer an employment by no means unpleasing. If, what afforded him amusement, should, agreeably, fill up the leisure of such as cannot look for information, or instruction in things of this kind; should it rectify the conceptions of any well-meaning, but mistaken, persons, or should it diminish the influence, and lessen the credit of an apostle of intolerance, he will, then, have discharged, to his own satisfaction, at least, the humble task he set himself.

His pen he has never drawn forth but in defence of those great principles of civil, and religious liberty, on which the well-being of the social state depends. On his past interferences he reflects with pleasure, conscious of their proceeding from the purest intentions, and having grounds to conclude, that they have not, altogether, failed of their end.

The papers have announced the promotion of Bishop Horsley. This See, at length,
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is deprived of his Lordship's services. The subsequence of this event to his Thirtieth of January Sermon, certainly does not brighten the prospects of the friends of liberty, and the real well-wishers of their country. With the Bishop's translation terminate the labours of the Welsh Freeholder. At taking leave he begs permission to make his best acknowledgments, to the several parties by whom he has been obliged; to the public, for the favourable reception his endeavours have met with; to the Bishop, for the honour he is supposed to have done him in the guise of a Clergyman of the Diocese of St. David's; to critics, for their impartiality, and candour; and to friends, for their encouraging testimonies.



FAREWELL

FAREWELL EPISTLES
TO THE
BISHOP OF ST. DAVID's.

LETTER I.
General Observations.

MY LORD,

AGAIN, presumes the Welsh Freeholder, to present himself before your Lordship, and the public; again, attempts he the vindication of an estimable body of men, from the heavy charges brought against them by your Lordship.

Were it the fashion of the day to attend to the language of reason; to follow the calm dictates of the understanding; were professions in harmony with practice, strengthened by the ties of situation, and corroborated by the principles of human nature, allowed to argue sincerity; the goodness of a cause to determine its success; the weight of evidence to influence decision; then would the task he undertakes be an easy one, its management would

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require little address, and as to its issue no doubt could be entertained.

Unhappily, ours is the period in which truth in vain seeks a hearing; in which the voice of impartiality speaks to no purpose; in which clamour triumphs over sense. Judgment and cool reflection have lost hold of the reins, passion and party rage guide the course of public opinion. Hence it is, my Lord, that the imputations you have thrown out claim our notice, that their absurdity and extravagance are not left to defeat their end; and hence it is, that the authour of charges as black as the darkest mind ever invented, or the most reprobate miscreants ever deserved, the public countenance and support have not deserted you.

Were we at a loss to judge of the temper of the times, we need only recur to your Lordship's late proceedings, and the consequences, as they respect yourself, to which they have led.

Recommending the heavenly work of charity, enforcing the duty of giving succour to distress, revolving those topics which soothe the heart, which melt it to kindness, which set the mind on the elevation from which humanity appears one great brotherhood, one living system, which the same principle animates, to which the same feeling gives motion: in your epistle we look for effusions suited to the occasion, but we look in vain. To give way
to

to them was a vulgarity to which you disdained to stoop. To take delight in the pleasures which throb in the bosom when charity is the theme; to discover fondness for gratifications of this sort appeared puerility to your masculine spirit; you scorned the thought; you made the temptation recoil. The nerves which carry sensation through your system are not of a make to admit of such vibrations. A more congenial sentiment rose in your bosom. Charity was on the lip, but rancour had possession of the heart. Ruminating over a subject calculated to awake all the sensibilities of the soul, to render the breast inaccessible to every consideration but such as is benevolent, the **Bishop** of St. David's, with all the coolness imaginable, steeps his pen in the bitterest gall, and infuses into his language the strongest venom. Had his claims to the first distinctions, as the man of a party, before been disputable, his conduct, in the instance before us, would have set them on a footing of never, again, being questioned.

But O, Virtue! what indignity to thee! To have the fairest in thy train made the occasion of preaching up to men mutual hate, the occasion of inculcating a spirit destructive of all that sweetens social life, a spirit that makes man the enemy of man for differences of opinion, that represents notions as crimes, and sentiments as grievous offences.

Your modesty is not at all put to the blush, when, in the face of Englishmen, you contrast the exiled priests of France with a respectable class of your dissenting fellow subjects. On such an occasion, had you even paid us a compliment, we should not have considered it as any stretch of candour, but merely the result of circumstances into which you had, injudiciously, brought yourself: but, to introduce us as foils to set off these modern confessors, we did not think any man possessed of sufficient effrontery. In this state of lowest degradation, we did not expect that our bitterest enemy would have dared to exhibit us. If we are so much worse than these persons, it is not, perhaps, ~~without~~ reason that you charge us with *treason* and *atheism*. But these persons; how are they all at once become such models of excellence? We, pretty well, know what the French priests were in their own country. Every one who has travelled in France recites anecdotes respecting them. The offices they rendered to our young men of fashion are recorded. How came they to be such saints in your Lordship's eyes? But admitting that you are a recluse, and much a stranger to these things, does it become a man of discernment, possessed of any authority over public opinion, to take up any cry that may suit the moment, to re-echo the sound to the hazard of his reputation? It is a good rule to judge of the tree by its fruits. How came it that you have so utterly over looked it? I ask you,

you, my Lord, does the Atheism so much talk-
ed of, does the state of religion, does the state
of morals, do the excesses which, of late, have
been committed in France, and of which we have
heard so much, bespeak extraordinary worth in the
clergy? Do these things agree with the strains of
commendation in which you have indulged*? If
so little credit be due to you when you praise, it is,
methinks, allowable to entertain suspicions when
you accuse, especially when the accusations are
backed by no proofs. Though I regard your com-
mendations of our Gallican brethren as ill applied,
and as injudicious as any that were ever bestowed,
yet I feel myself bound to do them the justice to
observe, that they were possessed of as much virtue
as could be expected from men in their situation.
Tied down to accursed celibacy, living among a
people among whom gallantry had risen to such
a height; where intercourse between persons of dif-
ferent sexes was subject to so few restraints; armed,
moreover, with the influence which the practice of
confession yields, and professing a religion which
allows of composition for moral deviations, is it
matter of wonder if these divines were not famed
for strict morals? The degeneracy of the French
clergy was not a thing that came on suddenly. Its

* The Bishop of London seems to have had better information in regard to this matter; he observes, " Their despoliation, is said (on " too good grounds with respect to some of them, I fear) to have been " no less owing to their non-residence, to their love of pleasure, " their loss of public esteem, than to the subversion of their civil " government."—See Bp. of London's Charge, deliv. in 1791, p. 25.

feeds, the principle of acceleration, lay in the peculiar circumstances of the body, and in the religious system it professed. If the Romish faith have not in it a great deal that has a tendency to corrupt its votaries, what labour have our Chillingworths, Stillingfleets, Tillotsons, and Bennets thrown away * ?

Far from us be vanity and self-conceit, but farther still than these contemptible weaknesses, be the tameness that is not roused to indignation at the hardihood that compares us, on any footing, with the late ministers of the Gallican church. We are all, I am willing to own, the creatures of circumstances; Catholics and Protestants; Trinitarians and Unitarians; Bishops and Reformers. In similar situations we should be more alike than we may be aware of. Had the Bishop of St. David's been but a simple Welsh Freeholder, we might have seen tracts against intolerance set off with the name of SAMUEL HORSLEY, and had the Welsh Freeholder been a Bishop, we might possibly have seen him, with all the swell of prelatical self-importance, denouncing sectaries, and hurling forth ana-

* I trust these observations will not be deemed, by any, to convey the least reflection on the Catholics of this country, in whose growing, and well-deserved popularity, no one rejoices more than myself. The author speaks of principles, and their abuse. He is aware, and he knows it to be fact, that habits and situation are mighty enough to counteract the one, and the other, and to give them a strong tendency, the directly opposite of their natural.

themas against heresy. Placed as the French clergy were, we probably should have been no better than they.

Previously to September, 1792, we all know how general the expectation was, that the army of the combined Kings would have effected a counter-revolution. Had affairs taken that turn, non-conformity would have been the best policy, as the constitutional clergy would not only have been dispossessed of their preferments, but have been declared disqualified to hold any. The treatment of the ecclesiastics in France, I own, has been throughout neither politic nor liberal. Yet as to any thing in their case that could be, fairly, said to press upon conscience, to bear hard upon religious principle, I own I never could discover. I cannot see wherein their situation, under the constitution of 1791, differed from that of their brethren in the other free governments of Europe. The security required of them, in exchange for all the immunities of free citizens, was, as far as I am able to judge, no greater than what the Catholics of this country cheerfully give for a very few. But with the consciences and the principles of these gentlemen what have we to do? They belong to the class of the unfortunate, that is sufficient for us to know. Britain held forth her hand to them when exiled from their native home. Her honour is concerned that they should not want. By all men, whatever their prejudices or predilections may be,

they should here be regarded as objects of compassion. Of this they cannot meet with more than I wish. Sorry am I to be obliged to speak of them in any other light. The blame, if there be any, I beg leave to lay at your Lordship's door, for it seemed less your aim to draw forth pity towards them, than to excite execration against us. How immeasurable your hate of us is, the choice of the occasion shews; the force of the principle is ascertained, by the violation of propriety it wrought. But, my Lord, for you, excuses should be made. A man who has been under the lash, feels sore. Your conduct towards the Unitarians, reminds me of the behaviour of the camel-like animal which bears the riches of Potosi. The weapon of defence which, when too hard driven, or any way provoked, it is most fond of using, is its saliva; this it discharges in amazing quantities. When the attendants see that its ire is up, when they perceive that it works its tongue, and moves its lips, to avoid the inundation with which they are threatened, they are glad to take to their heels. How far the analogy holds good let my readers judge. Certain it is that your tongue, lips, and hands are, on all occasions, in active employ to swell the torrent of calumny with which it is now attempted to overwhelm the Unitarian Dissenters; certain it is, that you met their champion in the field, but whether you were hard put to, or not, is a matter on which I do not expect my testimony to have any weight. In my opinion no testimony is necessary, the feelings

ings you discover are evidence such as none can mistake. Success is generous, abhorrent from defamation, it never takes to abuse when the contest is over. It is something very unlike success, which, at the expence of every shew of decency, indulges in scurrility; which converts the prelate into the scold, and makes the minister of religion use language that would pollute the mouth of the gentleman. Of general observations I take leave, my Lord, intending in the letters that follow to examine, singly, the particulars of the abuse with which you load us. In the mean while,

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER II.
Of Religious Sentiments.

MY LORD,

SPEAKING of the emigrants, you are pleased to say, "more near, and dear to us, in truth, by far, than some, who affecting to be called our Protestant brethren, have no other title to the name of protestant, than a Jew, or a Pagan; who not being a Christian, is, for that reason, only, not a Papist."

In this short passage no less than five religious parties make their appearance. The very circumstance of their number would furnish a philosophic mind with a lesson of candour; but the lordly prelate, with all the assurance of infallibility, goes upon the supposition, that in the endless chaos of opinions, none are right, but those which got the sanction of our eighth Harry, and of his imperious daughter; that as sentiments deviate from these they must be heretical. Are you serious in all this, my Lord? Never was the character of bigotry better supported! Approximation of creeds, simularity of religious rites, in this day of light made the only ground-works of good offices!

Between

Between your Lordship, and the emigrant clergy, the French fraternity exists in perfection. While the poor Unitarian is rudely repulsed, you admit them into close embrace. How fondly do you hug them! Your professions on this head somewhat surprised me. It seemed to me, not consistent with episcopal maxims of prudence, openly to state, even if there did exist, such nearness between your church and the Roman church, especially, if, as a host of commentators of your communion have maintained, that church be the *mother of harlots* spoken of in the Revelations. This profession is nevertheless generous; if the compliment serves a purpose, it is made, it must be owned, at some risque.

According to my way of viewing things, this accusation, though it wears a formidable appearance, as, indeed, does every one you advance, will prove, upon examination, to be no way serious. Why should it give us concern, to have it charged upon us, that our opinions are remote from those held by the respective churches of Rome and England? Why should it be matter of pride to you, and your catholic brethren, that your sentiments come near, or are the same with, those held in an age, on which the light of true philosophy never dawned, when human sagacity had not, as yet, been exercised in criticism, nor the genius of the oriental tongues disclosed; when freedom of thought was neither claimed, nor practiced, when faith was reputed a virtue, and its grasp of contradictions,

dictions, an evidence of holiness. Why should it be presumed to be a crime to disclaim the opinions prevalent in an age of this complexion? *Tempora mutantur, & nos mutamur ab illis*. Is it any crime that our manners have deviated from the sternness of those days, that our commerce and manufactures are differently carried on, that the conveniences of life exist in greater abundance and variety, that our habitations are neater, and more commodious? I see you can hardly command patience while I put to you these questions; and yet, my Lord, upon the word of an honest man, I assure you that the theological opinions of the men of those times appear to me as unreasonable, as their dwellings were uncouth; their principles of religion as wide of simplicity, as their principles of trade; and, for the life of me, I cannot see why you should excuse us for the one sentiment, while, for the other, once, every Sunday, and even oftener, you anathematize us. Rational faith you might, perhaps, connive at in persons in higher life, but in a peasant, or mechanic, it may appear to you an incongruity. To one of our old English writers it gave offence that cottages should have chimneys to them. He, probably, thought, that chimneys should only be appendages to palaces, and capital houses; that it became not a poor man to be above living in smoak. Too many there are, I suspect, in the present day, whose benevolence is of a sort with that of our shrewd historian.

Of late it has been much the fashion to run down religious freedom of thought. The inarticulate lamentations of aged dames, which, for some time, had been confined to chimney corners, have made their way into the pulpit, and been bellowed forth in classic sounds, to astonished audiences, by high-minded dignitaries. The spirit of free-enquiry is certainly gone forth, but for this who is to blame? It was your church that first indulged it, when the papal yoke was shaken off. The example which you set, we have copied. In cherishing, and encouraging this spirit, we have followed you, rather than taken the lead ourselves; we have been more imitators, than adventurers. The merit of adventure, justice constrains us to assign, chiefly, to members of your communion. We indeed have had the presumption to aim at treading in your footsteps, but the fate of our attempts, in this way, has been somewhat curious. For upwards of a century your divines have been very much practical preachers, in their sermons they have had little of the doctrinal. A part of the body of dissenters made these respectable men their models. The terms of the schools, and systematic phraseology disappeared from the compositions of Dissenters. The strain which pleased, and instructed in Tillotson, and Butler, charmed and edified in Foster and Abernethy. The doctrines of orthodoxy were assailed by Whiston and Clarke; these champions were not afraid to publish their heresies. The new tenets were countenanced by persons of the first distinction. In the same cause
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appeared our Emlyns and Pierces. A spirit of rationality, in religious matters, was evidently gaining ground among you. It was fostered by names of high respectability, it had the patronage of Jortin, Law, and Shipley. We also cherished it. In a LARDNER it found support equal to a host. Confessionals, Free and Candid Disquisitions, Associations for abolishing subscriptions, originating in the bosom of the church, prompted and called forth a similar spirit in our body. Hence has resulted our rational creed, now become our greatest crime. When you were Calvinists we were Calvinists; you became Arminians, so did we; you fell into the Arian heresy, we gave into the same error; numbers of your communion embraced the Unitarian faith, the same persuasion made rapid progress among us. Notwithstanding our changes, our condition has not meliorated. It has been, uniformly, our lot to be abused. When we were Calvinists, we were fanatics, and churchmen were in a hurry to become rational; they became so, we followed, and now the cry is, that we have refined away religion, are no longer to be regarded as protestant brethren.

May we not then, my Lord, accost you in the words of sacred writ; *We piped for you, but ye danced not; we mourned to you, but ye wept not. John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine, and ye say he hath a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold!*

Behold! a glutton and a drunkard! a friend of tax-gatherers and heathens! Churchmen now seem to bend their course backwards, in search of the point whence their predecessors set out. Where they will stop it is not perhaps easy to guess. Your Lordship being at the head of the expedition, we have no reason to expect that things will be done by halves. Who knows but that the wall of separation between the two churches may be thrown down; and should your Lordship rise to Canterbury, a treaty of alliance, defensive and offensive, may be formed between the British Metropolitan, and the head of the Roman see, by which the high-contracting parties will severally pledge themselves to use all the means in their power, to exterminate heresy from christendom. Things, alas! no less strange, our age has witnessed.

The gale which blows you on so prosperously, has not reached us. Our sails are impelled in their accustomed direction. Reflection has not induced us, nor policy had force to tempt us, to abandon rational assent, in order to commit ourselves to the guidance of implicit belief, of which your Lordship is the great patron, and advocate.

“Persons who, professing themselves to receive our Lord as a divine teacher, as the very Mahometans receive him, call in question what is not called in question by the Mahometans, the infallibility of his doctrine.”

To

To persons, at all acquainted with us, it may afford pleasure to learn, that the great community of Mussulmans consists of rather better christians than the Unitarian dissenters. My Lord, carry this principle to any length you please. Make it out that on your principles we are infidels, and what then? We become objects of pity, but, surely, not of resentment; you should, in the spirit of meekness, aim to set us right, and not point us out as marks to a multitude, whose passions you take all pains to inflame. David Hume was suffered to die in peace. Gibbon resides at Lausanne, from no dread of persecution. Are there not numbers, very great numbers, in all the classes of the community, who regard these men as apostles, and yet are permitted to live in quiet? Why must we then be disturbed, because, in your Lordship's estimation, we are not entitled to the name of christians? Do you, my Lord, deem christian belief essential to salvation, or a requisite qualification to a good subject? If you do, on what ground was it that, in the House of Lords, you opposed the measure of converting the Hindoos, proposed by the Metropolitan? How is this indifference to the spread of the gospel consistent with the zeal for opinions, so strongly, discovered in the Circular Letter? At one time to set your face against attempts to convert Pagans, at another to hold up diversity of sentiment as a ground of odium, are parts of your conduct, which you, perhaps, may be able to reconcile.

If,

If, in order to expose intolerance, I have met you on your own ground, let it not, thence, be inferred, that we make light of our christian hope. We highly prize it, we set on it a transcendant value, though we have not made our way over its altars into courts, nor found its sanctuary the avenue to temporal splendour. To us it is, nevertheless, the light in the landscape, what makes visible the tints and colours which render the view so delightful; the principle of exalted conduct, the motive to the sublime in morals, the principle that banishes despondency from the midst of gloom, that reconciles to the ordinances of heaven, however unaccountable; that commands acquiescence when we see a Horsley raised to the first honours his country can confer, a Watson languish in the least bishopric, a Parr unpreferred, a Priestley, the good man, the man of unequalled simplicity of character, Philosophy's favourite child, to whom there is scarcely a science that does not owe a wreath; Priestley persecuted, the prey of hired assassins of character, of professed detractors of worth; of the enemies of liberty, and of all moral principle; of the writers in those vehicles of intelligence, which threaten to efface every sentiment, and to eradicate every feeling, which once gave character to Britons.

In the conceptions of that man, who makes the contents of sacred writ agree with the doctrines of Plato, we may, indeed, be no christians.

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But,

But, my Lord, if *to do justice*, if *to love mercy*, and *to walk humbly with God*, be the whole of a christian's duty; if religion consist in *taking care of the fatherless, and widows in their distress, and keeping ones self unspotted from the world*; if *believing all that is written throughout the law, and in the prophets*; if *having a hope in God, that there will be a resurrection from the dead, both of righteous and unrighteous men*; if this faith, which Paul professes to his judges as the whole of his creed, entitle to the name of christians, then are we christians. If the authority of prophets and apostles be of weight, when opposed to that of an English Bishop, then is our claim good to the distinction. Pray who in this age and country has written most in defence of christianity? Are they not that very description of christians whom you would despoil of the very name?

In all that regarded our Saviour's divine mission, we hold the infallibility of his doctrine as fully as you do; to extend it farther, we apprehend, we have no warrant from the scriptures. How we can allow him absolute and universal infallibility, without admitting him to be God equal to the Father, which, you know, we deem a corruption of the christian faith, I leave you to shew. But, my Lord, I chuse not to be drawn into theological controversy, the present is not the season for it, the world is occupied by other disquisitions, which I have no wish to interrupt. The time
for

for discussing points of divinity may, again, come; brandish then your lance, and perhaps you may not be long in want of an antagonist. In the mean time, pretend as much abhorrence for our creeds as your buskin diction can express; misrepresent them in the highest degree perverse ingenuity is capable, in proof of their innocence we will appeal to our conduct, while this remains unimpeached we shall smile at your thunder, we will amuse ourselves with your anathemas. Toil to restore to orthodoxy her lost authority, to bigotry her awful sway, I shall trust to the good sense of my countrymen to render your labours fruitless.

Consistency can only be expected to accompany principle. To elucidate your claim to this virtue, I will not retail the anecdotes of early acquaintance. Let the reader compare, with your present Epistle, the declarations you have made on former occasions. In your charge to the clergy of St. Alban's, speaking of yourself in the third person, you observe, that "though the truth in these controversies, can be only on one side, he will indulge, and "he will avow the charitable opinion, that sincerity "may be on both;" again, you express it as your sentiment, "that men of all sects and parties, will "be assembled around the throne of God and the "Lamb." In your Letters to Dr. Priestley, there is to be found this passage, "Respect for individu-

“ als in Mr. Lindsey’s congregation, and in yours,
 “ as well as for you and for him *.”

Though your powers to raise clamour are great, though you have no small skill in disguising the evil and absurdity of principles, by pomp of phrase, though you excel in that high-sounding eloquence which confounds, though you can frame those measured periods, and are master of that dignified style which bespeak alliance with truth and sincerity; yet, I confess, I cannot feel serious apprehension that your doctrines will meet with general support. Though great heats subsist, though you are sensible of this, and will, no doubt, industriously fan them, yet I trust they will not kindle up into the fire of persecution. It is, my Lord, a dangerous fire. It may devour the innocent victims, but it will finally prove the destruction of the incendiaries.

I am, my Lord, &c.

■ See Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley, p. 755. Ditto, p. 291.

LETTER

LETTER III.

Of Political Doctrines.

MY LORD,

HAD you simply indulged in invectives against heresy, in outcries against the general departure from orthodoxy, for me you might have enjoyed the amusement. Our creeds respect ourselves only, the public are in possession of them, and of the reasons why we prefer them. If we support the character of honest men, neither individuals, nor collective bodies, have ought to do with our faith. My attention is now called to your full-length sketches of us, politically viewed. Having drawn us as we respect the next world, you hang us up as we stand connected with the present; and more curious forms, I will venture to say, canvasses has never yet exhibited.

“ Who, under an affected zeal for civil and religious liberty, are endeavouring to propagate in this country those very notions of the sovereignty of the people, the rights of man, and the unlimited right of private judgment, in opposition to ecclesiastical discipline; those treasonable and atheistic notions, which, in France, have wrought the total

“ subversion of the civil, and ecclesiastical constitution, the confusion of all rights, the abolition of all property, the extinction of all religion, and the loss of all liberty to the individual, except that of blaspheming God, and reviling Kings.”

How bold the lines! How marked the features! The pencil of a master! Poets who, in ancient times, described the Titan race, blush! Hide thy diminished head blind bard! The devils of Paradise Lost are outdone; the imagination of our artist has given shape and form to more-finished fiends; he has furnished pieces worthy of the gallery of Pandemonium, sure of being admired by the connoisseurs of the place.

Deep physiologists! Profound students of human nature! Attend! A phenomenon claims your notice. Give us the solution. Determine, what the disorder in the optic nerve, what the derangements in the brain, to which is owing, that Unitarians being the archetypes, monsters from hell are the images in the mind; sincere christians, charitable persons, good neighbours, pleasing companions, the originals; the representations, those of wretches, more abandoned than ever dungeon ingulphed.

By what magic thus transformed, by what charm deprived of our wonted shapes? If these be our likenesses, heaven have compassion upon us!

Even

Even charity, divine and gentle charity, will pronounce us fit inmates of Milton's hell in the next world, and condemn us to the plantations in this. Nay, were there dealers in white slaves, she would pack us off for the market, relentless, she would expose us to sale, and then might orthodox palates be, twice, or thrice, every day, tickled at the expence of the sweat, blood, and liberty of miscreants who had forfeited these blessings, and not, as is now the case, at that of harmless innocents.

My Lord, you see I am not sufficient master of myself to refrain regarding in a ludicrous light the charges, about which you have thrown so much of the solemn, and the terrific.

Permit another skirmish before the battery of reason opens, before the regular attack commences.

Allow me to suppose, some person ignorant of Unitarian Dissenters, and of the state of parties among us, by some chance to stumble upon your Circular Epistle. On the testimony of a holy man, of one who stands high in the sanctuary, of one dignified by spiritual distinctions, of one who bends under ecclesiastical honours, on this grave and weighty authority he learns, that there is a sect that hold notions which are treasonable and atheistic; which subvert civil, and ecclesiastical constitutions; which confound all rights; abolish property; extinguish

tinguish religion; destroy all liberty, except that of uttering blasphemy, and treason. He would ask himself, Is this truth, or is it romance? But the authority! It must be true; it came from a venerable pastor of the church, who, in reciting the melancholy fact, must have done violence to the gentleness and forbearance attached to his calling, and to the office in which he was at the time engaged, for he was recommending charity. Its truth, then, he finds himself compelled to admit. The intelligence engages his thoughts, and strikes him in two distinct views. If these people, he says, take no other than the ordinary methods to propagate their principles, in an enlightened age, indeed in any age, they cannot excite apprehension; the absurdity and evil tendency of their tenets constitute effectual bars to their spread; they are opposite to every sentiment natural to man, to every interest which he feels. He would reflect, that if any were now to revive such notions as those of John of Leyden, they would neither gain proselytes, nor cause the least alarm. In the same predicament, must be regarded the opinions which, according to the Bishop, our Dissenters profess.

If they can be convicted of acting upon these principles, he would naturally demand, Why has not the law its full course upon them? Why rests in its scabbard the sword of justice? Why spares it such daring conspirators against peace and order? Agents of the executive power, What is become
of

of your famed vigilance, of that vigilance to which the Banks of the Bog, and the shores of Nootka, bear witness? Why sleep our rulers! Why remain ye inactive? Truly alarming is your remissness! Cruel is your clemency! If no law have been provided for delinquency of so monstrous a size, why does not the subject engross the first care of the legislature? Why meets the evil, only, the feeble resistance of senatorial rhapsodies, and pulpit declamation? Upon the whole, if he found that a few persons entertained eccentric opinions, he would be convinced, that they held them, merely, as matters of speculation, and would conclude the fears which the good prelate expressed, to be destitute of foundation, and to proceed from over great solicitude for the public welfare.

I now propose, my Lord, more seriously, to examine the articles of your charge, to ascertain what it is that they amount to, and to determine their probability. They consist of assertions. No proofs appear. To overthrow charges, completely, while the evidence on which they are alledged, is not brought forwards, I must confess beyond my power; produce the evidence, and I will undertake to prove the accusations false. At present the point I have to labour is, that my clients are to be presumed innocent. Two ways there are, of strengthening the presumption, the one, by weakening the credit of the accuser; the other, by demonstrating the improbable nature of the charges.

Whether

Whether the motives of the accuser be clear of all suspicion; whether there be any room to charge him with malice against the accused party, in consequence of transactions between him and it, between him and any of its members; or whether, in what he has advanced, he has been, solely, actuated by sentiments of pure regard to religion, and the general good, are matters, the consideration of which I shall wholly wave. Our exculpation I shall rest on the improbable nature of the charges. With this mode of defence necessity obliges me to be content, till the accuser has dressed out his proofs, and thinks proper to commit them to open day. To this I dare him.

“ Who, under the mask of an affected zeal for
“ civil and religious liberty.”

If zeal for civil and religious liberty be deemed a good quality, I was in hopes there was one to which our bitterest enemy would have allowed our claim to be valid. But no, my Lord of St. David's denies us this quality, of questionable nature; I say questionable, because I fancy that, in his estimation, it is such. There is not a culprit in Newgate in whom some trait of goodness may not be discovered, but in those whom Bishop Horsley brings before the bar of the public, there appears not one. Strange is it, my Lord, if what is, as it were, ingrafted in our nature; what we suck in with our mother's milk; what grows up, and becomes

comes one with us. Strange is it ! If our zeal for this be a thing assumed, a mere pretext ! Liberty, my Lord, we teach our children to love ; we make them lisp its sacred name. Life, we tell them, without it, is a *fardeau* not to be borne ; we exhort them to be brave in its cause, to die, if necessary, in its support, and to honour it by their virtues. As Dissenters we are aware, that to liberty, civil and religious, we owe our existence, the protection we have enjoyed, and the respect in which we have been held. We have been taught to regard liberty as the basis of Britain's superiority in the scale of nations ; of that manliness of character, which is the pride of its inhabitants ; of that commerce, which has poured into its bosom the best produce of every clime ; of that science, which has raised its sons to the highest pinnacle of fame. Strange, my Lord, if with these views our zeal for civil and religious liberty should be a thing taken up to serve a purpose ! Against the calumny, we appeal to the whole of our history, to the part we espoused in the revolution, in the settlement of the Protestant succession, in the different rebellions, and in the dispute with America.

“ Are endeavouring to propagate in this country, those very notions of the sovereignty of the people, the rights of man, and the unlimited rights of private judgment, in opposition to ecclesiastical discipline.”

Here

Here we have a striking instance of the use that may be made of the equivoque, a figure which is, admirably, adapted for the purposes of sophistry, and those of giving a wrong bias to the public mind, "Who propagate in this country those very notions of the sovereignty of the people, the rights of man, &c." The doctrines you do not attack. I may presume, then, that you hold them; that they are dear to you, as they ought to be to every Briton. If there be no sovereignty in the people, what right have they to constitute themselves into an independent nation, to set up a chief, an hereditary, and elective council? If sovereignty belong not to the people, how can Kings make good their titles to it? From whom do they derive it? Who determined its boundaries, by whom has it been limited? Does sovereignty belong to Kings, *jure divino*? Unluckily for the interests of political superstition, this doctrine will not suit us. The doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, is a doctrine professed and practised upon in this country. Deems your Lordship his Majesty's title to the throne less respectable than that of any other European Monarch whatever, because his ancestors were called to it by the voice of a free people, who settled the Brunswick family upon it, to the exclusion of the next heirs? Between the native slavery, and the sovereignty of the people, there is no medium; he who rejects the latter, must admit the former. At the idea of admitting such a tenet, there is not, I trust, a British heart that
 does

does not revolt. We disclaim not the doctrine; but the notions of it with which you charge us, we regard as calumnies the most gross; we challenge you to produce a shadow of proof that we harbour them.

“The rights of man.”

Neither do you call in question this doctrine; you, only, blame certain notions held concerning it. You, I dare say, will allow that man's native and imprescriptible rights, furnish the only groundwork on which a free government can be erected. On no other foundation, you will admit, can it rest secure. If men have no rights, governors cannot invade them; then the resistance to the elder Charles was, in the first instance, rebellion: the abettors of King William were rebels, and our Sovereigns, from that day to this, usurpers; then was the Parliament which voted that the *influence of the crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished*, undutiful and disloyal. If the people have no rights, resistance, in all cases, is unwarrantable; the magistrate may extend his power to any degree he pleases, there is no legitimate check. The doctrine of the rights of man is an old doctrine among us. The people of this country opposed with force of arms one King, and drove out another, because they invaded their rights. The same reason made them twice depart from the line of succession. The constitution of
Britain,

Britain, in the time of our Saxon ancestors, was founded upon the rights of man. Under the first princes of the Norman line it became nearly despotic, from that time to the period of the Revolution, it was in a state of amelioration. At that period it was made to harmonize with this doctrine, which, in substance, if not in words, I hope, and trust, Britons will ever cherish.

“ And an unlimited right of private judgment.”

If holding the doctrine, and not certain strange notions respecting it, be the crime you alledge, we plead guilty to the charge. How, my Lord, can the right of private judgment be limited? Can I see with your Lordship's eyes? Do sounds cause exactly the same vibrations in my ears, they do in your's? If this be not so, why must I, in viewing a landscape, or hearing a piece of music, express myself in the same words with your Lordship? In these, or in any cases, how can I do it without belying my inward sentiments? How can the right of private judgment, in any degree, be given up, how can it, in any shape, be limited, without involving men in the sins of hypocrisy and insincerity? Any limitation of it must convert us all into hypocrites and dissemblers. Of what use would any limitation of private judgment be? Would it yield any benefits to preclude all discussion, which consists in the collision of the private senti-

sentiments of individuals, and which can lead to no inconvenience, provided it be admitted as an inviolable principle, that, in all matters, which relate to the body politic, every man should submit to rightful authority, to the authority which the general will acknowledges and obeys. Will your Lordship be pleased to inform us, if private judgment is to be limited, how far the limitation is to go; upon what principles you mean to proceed in determining the boundaries; and under whose direction the blessed work is to be executed? The very thought of such an undertaking, even though under the management of your sacred bench, makes me wishfully look towards the setting sun; and, whenever such a matter is set on foot, ye gales, I beseech you, waft me o'er to climes more congenial to the feelings and sentiments of the free-born spirit of man! May some remote region afford me an asylum from the worst of all tyrannies, tyranny over the mind!

“In opposition to ecclesiastical discipline.”

If our conduct be regulated agreeably to the laws, in all civil matters, we seek to give, we boast of no other proofs of good citizenship. By ecclesiastical discipline I know not what your Lordship means. If you mean by it any spiritual jurisdiction exercised by your church, what have we to do with it, or at least what ought we to have to do with it? Is it fitting that a power lodged in the
hands

hands of certain persons, for regulating the concerns of your church, should extend to those whom the law protects in their dissent from that church? Favour us, my Lord, with an ingenuous answer to this question? Pray, my Lord, oblige us by some account of this ecclesiastical discipline, which should controul the restless spirit of enquiry, at present abroad in the world. What are its laws, and who is to see to their execution? On what man, or on what body of men, rests the infallibility requisite for the discharge of so high a trust? Blessed, indeed, will be our condition, when thus tutored by our spiritual guides; when thus instructed by them, as to the books we must read, and the sentiments we must hold; when nothing shall be published but what has upon it their *imprimatur*; when Horsley, Tatham*, &c. shall publish *indices expurgatorii*. Should priests find this *rara temporum felicitas* again, return; should we advance in improvements of this nature, those whose taste is too an-

* To be united with these men, the worthy divine, who, lately, proposed to starve into conformity, and to cure of schism by want of bread, presents claims that ought not to be slighted. Though of obscure name, he has shewn original genius; he has suggested a method of elucidating points of theology, untried in modern times. Accustomed, no doubt, to fast himself, during the holy season of Lent, he may know its advantages by experience; he has probably found it to be a regimen which favours the play of the faculties, renders the perception clear, and assists the mind to soar. Hence the good gentleman may think that it might wonderfully help our incredulous Dissenters to conceive of the mysteries which the church holds. Hence he proposes a plan which would reduce them to fasting, or at least, a very plain fare.

Vid. Foley's Letter to Dr. Priestley.

tiquated

tiquated to relish them, whose spirits are too stubborn to bend to them, and who may be, too little, initiated in modern *politesse* to forego the gratification of professing what they think, and believe, will have only one resource left. So much for our notions of the sovereignty of the people, the rights of man, and the unlimited right of private judgment, &c.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Notions of rights, and property, ascribed to Dissenters.

MY LORD,

IF your Lordship's word may be depended upon, "we propagate those treasonable and
 "atheistical notions, which, in France, have
 "wrought the total subversion of the civil, and
 "ecclesiastical constitution, the confusion of all
 "rights, the abolition of all property, the extinction of all religion, and the loss of all liberty
 "to the individual, except that of blaspheming
 "God, and reviling Kings."

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Awful

Awful charges truly ! More awful it is hardly possible to allege ; but they stand utterly unsupported by proof ; they rest on the bare ground of your Lordship's testimony. Is it a privilege belonging to your Lordship's rank to accuse, without making good the accusation ? Your Lordship says that we propagate, I say that we abominate, treasonable and atheistical notions.

“ We propagate those notions which, in France, “ have wrought the total subversion of the civil, “ and ecclesiastical constitution.” Pray, my Lord, what are these notions ? We once had, in this country, as your Lordship well knows, a civil and ecclesiastical constitution, such as have been lately subverted in France. They have been subverted here, Norman tyranny has given way to a free government, a Popish to a Protestant establishment. What notions produced these subversions ? Were these the notions that produced similar subversions in France ? If they were, my Lord, they need not, I hope, be propagated ; they are, I trust, already rooted in every British heart. Could you have said nothing worse of these notions, than that they overthrew the civil and ecclesiastical constitutions of France, I should have thought that, no presumption to their disadvantage ; nay, my Lord, I should consider it as a recommendation of them. Notions that may overset a bad government may be the best supports of a good one. Has the British govern-

government ought to fear from notions which overthrew the old despotism of France? Has the empire of virtue to apprehend danger when notions prevail destructive of that of vice? Is the authority of reason in any danger from maxims that shake that of mere custom? What, my Lord, was the old government of France? Your Lordship, and my readers know, too well, what it was, to require here, an analysis of it. Suffice it to observe, that, under it, the press was not free, the rights of conscience were not acknowledged, the people were not represented; that there existed a Bastille, Lettres de Cachet, the Gabelle, Corvées, and saleable justice. He who rejoiced not in its fall, must have been the slave of interest, the dupe of prejudice, or the enemy of his species. As to the ecclesiastical constitution, with what face can a divine of the Church of England lay it as a crime at the door of any notions to subvert that? What was it? was it not part of that corrupt antichristian system, for the downfall of which Protestant divines, for upwards of two hundred years, have been importuning heaven, and, with their writings against which, they have deluged the world?

I see not why we are to be, for ever, dinned with the events that have taken place in France. Unhappily we are too much disposed to meddle in the affairs of that country; but if these matters must be brought forwards, let us judge of them

fairly ; setting aside the effusions of your clamorous eloquence, let us discriminate things which it is important not to confound. The excesses, disgraceful to humanity, and ever to be lamented, into which the French have run, are not chargeable upon notions, but upon men, and upon habits ; upon men, and upon habits formed, when notions very different from those which you censure were in vogue*. The principles avowed by the great leaders in the French Revolution, have been the principles of all men in this country since the Revolution, (the Jacobites excepted) ; they were the principles on which that measure was brought about, and on which alone it can be justified. We know it, my Lord, to be possible for good notions to give rise to ill consequences ; but these afford no grounds for rejecting them, if they did, there would not be left in the world a notion fit to be entertained, as there is no one which, at some time or other, has not been perverted.

You state to your clergy, and they, poor folks, are ordered to tell their people, that we abet and promulgate notions which “ confound all rights, and destroy all property ;” a charge that flies in the face of all probability. What is the description of the men against whom it is adduced ? Are they adventurers, men of no property, averse from industry ? Are they such as are skilled in intrigues,

* See Note A.

are they ready in political manœuvres, adepts in the arts of popularity? Do they court the favour of mobs, do they encourage them to acts of violence? Are they not, for the most part, persons who have possessions to lose, are they not in situations to be most affected by commotions? Are there not among them, who have greatly improved our manufactures, who have gained distinction in the field of science, who have cultivated with success various branches of literature? It is a work that must surpass then the genius of Newton's luminous commentator, to demonstrate the possibility of men of this description wishing the confusion of rights, and the destruction of all property. Do they seek the destruction of all liberty, except that of uttering blasphemy and treason? They abhor such principles, and are as averse as you are to their prevalence.

Affertion against assertion you see, my Lord. The charge of befriending blasphemy I shall in no other way meet. From such a charge shall I attempt a vindication? Ink and paper are not to be so wasted. My own time, and that of the reader, are not to be so trifled with. That of disloyalty I shall have occasion to consider in another place. In the mean time I propose to indulge myself in a desultory excursion over those grounds which could determine so able a calculator as yourself, so far to risque reputation,

as to hazard charges so void of foundation as those are, which you have been at so much pains to dress up, and at so little to prove.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Views of Government.

MY LORD,

IN search of the causes of the umbrage taken against us, I shall go no farther back than the date of the Revolution which has happened in France. When twenty-six millions of men shook off the most galling and oppressive despotism, lovers of freedom, we felt joy at so many sons being born to her. Would not a good christian, your Lordship for instance, rejoice, were he to hear, that the whole empire of China was converted to the christian faith. Of a similar kind was our joy, on account of this event. Prizing liberty, when we saw its votaries increase, when we saw a
nation

nation of eminent influence, of general resort, accustomed to give the *ton* to the rest of Europe, a nation respectable for its science, its arts, its letters, its polished manners, declare decidedly in its favour, it was natural for us to feel heart-felt satisfaction.

You have not, my Lord, to learn, that in this the whole nation was engaged, heart and hand. All that was great, whether arising from rank, talents, services, or character, was thrown into the revolution scale. The opponents chiefly consisted of the agents of corruption, of those who fattened upon abuses. Destitute of every feeling that does credit to human nature, must that man be, who, at such a sight, could be cool and indifferent. Humanity, as well as policy, attached us to the change. As we were humane, we rejoiced to see so many men released from the yoke of slavery, so many slaves, as by miraculous interposition, at once transformed into so many free men. On the grounds of policy, we were delighted with the professions of cultivating universal peace; we could not foresee that these would have been violated. The influence of an intriguing cabinet being at an end, we expected fewer calls to shed blood, and to expend treasure. We thought it neither unwarrantable, or criminal, to indulge the hope that the new government of France would be the means of infusing freedom into surrounding despotisms; that it would induce arbitrary princes to regard more the welfare of their people; that it would have made

more easy to introduce into this country that reform in the representation for which Chatham and Saville had contended, and which Blackstone, in his day, stated as desirable, and which, a little before, we, and other friends of liberty, headed by our present prime minister, had laboured so much to get the people of this country to adopt. Had these effects followed, the last excepted, would they not have afforded pleasure to every benevolent mind of every party among us? We had no access to the secrets of cabinets, we were strangers to the treaties at this very time in agitation, which were to overturn limited monarchy in France, and make an amiable prince fall the victim of national vengeance, and to excite in a loyal people a frantic spirit of democracy. Could we foresee the system of club government, since introduced, the arbitrary and intolerant measures, since adopted? Had we been furnished with eyes to see thus far, we should have retained, on the occasion, as much gravity as your Lordship; not a spark of joy should have illuminated our brows; we also should have maintained dignity, and exhibited the semblance of politic wisdom. Circumstanced, as matters then were, our conduct did honour to our feelings, if it discredited our foresight; and our joy was participated by all the enlightened of Europe.

By all such as wish to form right judgments of men, and things, it should be remembered, that we rejoiced not in the new government, so much
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in itself considered, as, in it, as the substitute of that destructive one to which it succeeded. Had it been widely different, our testimonies of joy would have been the same. We rejoiced that an absolute monarchy had made way for one that was limited, that a fair national representation was set up, and, circumstanced as we are, you may, naturally, suppose it would give us more than ordinary pleasure to see, established, perfect liberty in matters of religion. Low and illiberal minds conceived, or pretended to conceive, that the instances in which the French constitution deviated from our own, were the only things that gave us joy. But believe me, my Lord, had our neighbours, like the Americans, elected a senate, or set up a house of Lords, such as there is in England, our exultation would have been none the less.

A person whose memory we hold in high respect, then among the living, recommended an alliance between the two countries. Had this advice been attended to, and as well received on this side of the water, as it was on the other; had Britain guaranteed the new constitution of France, there would have been, at this day, a King in that country; and what is more, my Lord, an established religion, one richly endowed; peace would have reigned in Europe, commerce and the arts flourished, and the French, a free people, have tasted the blessings of liberty. Russia, and Prussia, would not have ventured upon those nefarious projects,

jects, which are not merely a disgrace to themselves, but to surrounding powers, the still spectators of their triumphant infamy. What an opportunity had the minister here to signalize himself; but it is only one, among many others equally favourable, which it has been his singular good luck to meet; but, whether, in the use he has made of them, he has shewn the masculine understanding of the man, or the policy of the meer minister, let the still voice of his own conscience, let impartial observers declare. What has, since, happened in France, the overthrow of the constitution of which we are speaking, the unavoidable consequence of internal treachery, and foreign force, and the events, subsequent to this catastrophe, are topics fitter to be dwelt upon by your Lordship, by the enemies of liberty, than by one devoted to its cause. To you, and them, France exhibits a picture that gratifies. The professions of horror, the airs of commiseration, ill conceal the unholy joy which sits on the countenance, and the malignant triumphs which swell the heart. The affairs of that country afford an ample repository of matter for common place declamation against liberty, civil and religious; against reforms of all kinds. The scene, once so bright, in which the genius of benignity, raised, as by the touch of magic, objects to fill, with delight, the bosom of philanthropy, is become dark, and dismal, the region of jarring elements, subject to the sway of hellish fiends. Such, in the course of its progress, did the reformation from Popery, once, appear. We nevertheless, justly,

justly, regard it as a blessing, as what gave rise to a more improved state of society. May the commotions which now agitate the world, have a similar issue !

Because we approved of the French Revolution in its commencement, are we obliged to be abettors of every thing that has since happened in that country ? If patriotism has led to unbridled vengeance, if a love of liberty has been blended with extravagances of various kinds, cannot we still venerate the former, without feeling predilection for the latter ; if the French have disgraced a good cause, does it, on that account, change its nature, and become, essentially, bad ? If the French nation has dishonoured itself by sanguinary proceedings, by public acts of injustice, by desertion of principles, itself had consecrated, by disregard of laws, which the consent of the people had sanctioned, with these circumstances what have we to do ? Were we admitted into its councils, did we direct its views ?

To compare great things with small, Dr. Horsley, in some of his works, if my memory does not misinform me, tells us, that he was once in the habits of free-enquiry. If I had happened, publicly, to applaud at that time, the inquisitive, ingenuous youth, ought I to share the disgrace of the discourses, and proceedings of the intolerant Bishop ? If circumstances, as far as we are able to
take

take them in, stamp propriety upon our actions, we are, at least, innocent.

Another of our crimes was, wishing the popular branch of our constitution restored to its original soundness. From such a reform, which the hand of time had made necessary, and which, implied nothing against the original perfection of the building, we hoped that, besides adding beauty to the fabric, it would have given rise to manifold benefits, such as an alleviation of our public burthens, less profusion in the disposal of our lives, and treasures, less attention to foreign politics, more to internal matters, more to the good of the lower orders of the community, to their morals, and instruction. If, in this instance we sinned, let it never be forgot that we have sinned in good company, with the Chathams, the Savilles, and Blackstones of the country ; that our incomparable prime minister, however clear he now may be of it, once laboured under the delusion.

Our efforts, in the business of the Test and Corporation Acts, are among our crimes. Whether we deserve the full rights of citizens, or no, it was natural we should desire to be possessed of them. The wish indicates no disposition that disparages the man, or the citizen. We demanded it, we are told, with too high a tone; we claimed it as a right, instead of petitioning for it as a favour. This shews we had a high sense of the goodness of
our

our cause. Were we indiscreet, grievously have we been punished for our indiscretion. Were we wanting in respect to the legislature, our error was not intentional, nor did we transgress against any form. Many persons of great wisdom, wholly uninfluenced by party considerations, did think that if the measure had been adopted, no existing interest would have been hurt, that it would have had a happy effect in uniting us.

Persons less fond of braving decency, who leave to superior effrontery the exclusive merit of charging us with treasonable and atheistic notions, seem to entertain an idea, that we hold opinions incompatible with attachment to the British Constitution. Excuse me, my Lord. A few words with these gentlemen.

Gentlemen !

I shall be very plain with you, and let you fully into the secret of our political sentiments. For our constitution I shall not make professions of veneration which I do not feel, nor make a merit of attachment to which my heart is a stranger. Amid the discussions which political subjects have, of late, undergone, it is impossible that the opinions of speculative men (and the number of such among dissenters is considerable) should have remained stationary. On points of speculation how rarely do men agree ? If they differ in their sentiments with regard to religion, which came from heaven,
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how much more will they differ with regard to the theory of the British Constitution, a work, confessedly, of human device? I am far from setting a low value on theories of government. Temperate attempts to perfect theory, as well as practice, shall always have my cordial support. At the same time observation teaches, that theories avail little when the agents are without principle. To hold opinions concerning a form of government, is one thing, to wish its overthrow, when already established, is quite another. To the mind that reflects, the overthrow of a constitution is a most serious business; before it will entertain such a wish, and much more before it will embark in the measure, it will consider well whether the existing one cannot be ameliorated; whether it be not better to bear the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of; whether it be not better to put up with inconveniencies, than expose to hazard the peace of the present generation; whether it be not better to amend, than encounter the dangers of pulling down; to repair, than to rebuild. It will, well, consider, whether a constitution more perfect in theory, has any advantages over one less perfect, to which the people are attached, which has its basis in their affections, and which its very enemies pretend to venerate. Before a wise man becomes a revolutionist, the ills he suffers must be equal to the ills he hazards. The proprietor of a mansion, upon the whole comfortable and convenient, might, were it again to be re-built, make considerable alterations

terations in it, notwithstanding this, he may set on it the highest value, feel most happy in the possession of it, and risque his life to defend it against foreign assailants. Do you value, gentlemen, the commerce of the country? The fortunes of most of us are embarked in it? Do you wish to keep up public credit, that the sources of our wealth should continue open? Are you enemies to great political innovations, because they sink the one, and shut up the other? On the same principles they must be unwelcome to us. But, gentlemen, great abuses have crept into the constitution; it is neither wise nor manly to conceal them; they might with safety be removed, and it would be the interest of all to have them removed, would all agree in the measure.

We are aware, that, in considering what government is best, we ought not to contemplate it in the abstract, but with reference to the habitudes, prejudices, and manners of the people for whom it is destined; what government in their actual circumstances will best promote their happiness; what will produce the most good, with the fewest ills. We are aware that equal laws, impartially administered, and faithfully executed, security of person and property, a weight in the community proportioned to each individual's services, talents, and virtues, are the great ends of government; that which best secures these, is the best government, whatever be its forms, and by whatever name called.

led. In different countries, different forms may best answer these ends. Hence, though we may have differed one among another, and with persons of other religious communities, about theories of government, we are enemies to any innovation in the British Constitution, and only wish to see it restored to soundness. Though some of us may believe that it is possible for human wisdom to devise a constitution superior to the British, though we may think it not so perfect, but that reason in its progress, may discover defects in it; though we cannot see that its abuses belong to its essence, we are still sensible that it is a constitution which cool and considerate persons will regard with respect. From one of the deepest thinkers it received praise in theory, before it had existence in practice; it has been the fond theme of panegyric to the first geniusses of this, and of other countries. Under it, national reputation has risen to a great height; a spirit of enterprize, never paralleled, has been generated; a sum of general happiness never, before, equalled, has been enjoyed; a fairer field for talents to display themselves no country ever presented. In making these acknowledgments we take pleasure. May the period never come when they can be, no longer, made!

Our attachment to the constitution is not founded in political superstition. You see the grounds on which it reposes. But, we should not forget, gentlemen, that our government is a government of checks,

checks, that when one of the branches ceases to be jealous and vigilant, from its very nature degeneracy will follow. Remember that its corruptions may increase, its excellencies become fewer; that its forms may be retained, when its spirit is lost. Nothing is more likely to bring this about than that puerile fondness for it, that childish timidity, and overstrained caution, which will not suffer its decayed parts to be restored to soundness, which prevents a fresh portion of salubrity being infused into it. By going on in this way, of liberty, we may, at length, have nothing but the name, of its blessings, nothing but the remembrance. The time may come, when that firm tone of character, that high spirit, that undaunted perseverance, which nothing could brave, or overcome, the produce of the foil of liberty, chilled by the noxious breath of all-pervading influence, may sink into servility, languor, and frivolity. Our constitution, like reason, in its course has been progressive. From the moment that it ceases to be, thus, progressive, its downfall becomes certain, its ruin unavoidable. From us, I think, you will admit, that it has nothing to fear, but I will describe to you the persons from whom it has to dread danger; persons in power, deaf to the distresses of the people, profuse of their blood and treasures; fond of engaging in expensive, and unnecessary wars, and who, thus, accumulating the public debt, lessen the hope of its reduction, and, by that means, diminish confidence in public security.

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rity. It is against such men that the good-natured people of this country should be on their guard.

Gentlemen, I have now fully laid our principles before you, I ask you, are we worthy to retain the mutilated privileges which, as British subjects, legally disqualified to serve our country, we have, hitherto, enjoyed? If we fail in the requisites of good subjects, let us know in what it is that we do fail, and we will do what lies in our power to supply the defect. In a country in which we deem it right to live, we deem it laudable to have the merit of being good citizens, let us know in what this merit consists, and if we hold any principles incompatible with its attainment, be assured, we shall think it a duty we owe the country, and ourselves, to bid it farewell. Let us know the conditions on which we may enjoy protection. Allow us time to deliberate upon them, if they are such as we cannot comply with, let us be allowed, with the free, and full consent of government, to emigrate to those countries, where our reason will be less offended; or, if you please, where our prejudices will better coalesce with the prejudices that predominate. Frankness on one side, claims liberality on the other; we ask not for favours, justice is all that we demand. Britain, heretofore, generous to enemies, let her be equally so to persons, who wish her welfare; who, though leaving her, may still serve her; who, though their connexion with her.

her may be broke, will guard their bosoms against every wish unfriendly to her prosperity. Unite with us then to put an end to the usage under which we, at present, labour. You know that all that the most fertile invention is capable of bringing forth, that the most inveterate malignity can utter, and the grossest credulity swallow, is in daily circulation against us. The vehicles of intelligence, known by the name of treasury prints, make us the constant theme of abuse. Magistrates, if what report says be true, but, for the sake of my country's credit, I hope it is false, have been heard, not casually, when unawares proposed in the hours of conviviality, but repeatedly, and without disguise, to drink damnation to a set of people, whom the constitution recognizes, whom the law protects, whose liberties the King, at his coronation, swears to preserve, and whose religion is the established religion of one part of the empire, as well as of several other countries of Europe. In the sanctuary of our laws un sullied, and distinguished characters have had every obloquy heaped upon them, and from the pulpit the ministers of religion have hurled out their anathemas. Let this, gentlemen, be a moment of cool reflection; place yourselves in our situation, and can you conceive of one more unpleasant.

Is it to be wondered at, that we are in jeopardy every hour, that our persons are insulted, that we are in apprehension for our property, that the pro-

fane vent on us their curses, that miscreants make it their business to circulate against us the most barefaced falsehoods. The effects of these practices, gentlemen, have come home to some of us, to some in their persons, and property, to some in their quiet and peace of mind, and some have been sent into that country from whose bourne no traveller returns. If we deserve such usage, we claim the notice of the law, and we ought not to be spared; but to our present usage, exert all your influence that an end may be put, for the honour of the country, and the credit of the government. We know what little the populace can do, and what little they are inclined to do, when the notice and encouragement of their superiors are withdrawn. Remember, that when you make use of them, you are employing a dangerous weapon, which may, one day, be wielded against yourselves.

Gentlemen, let me detain you upon a project of which you may have heard, that of *crushing the dissenters*. It has been said, with what truth I am not able to learn, that some men, flushed with the success they have had in demolishing opposition, have extended their views to the utter discomfiture of the whole body of the friends of liberty, and that it is determined to begin with the dissenters, as being among the foremost in this cause, and as being more easily subdued on account of the unpopularity of their religious sentiments. His courtiers told Louis XIV. there was nothing wanting

ing to fill up the measure of his glory, but the extinction of heresy. The lure took with the vain despot. Accordingly all the arts of address, all the devices of violence were had recourse to. Immense numbers sunk under the persecution, and thousands emigrated into other countries, and associated odium with the name of the Grand Monarque. The mighty prince failed in his project. Protestantism survived his iniquitous efforts, and is, at this moment, very powerful in France. A descendant of the persecutor, the most amiable of the Bourbon race, has died on the scaffold, and the successors to the instigators of the persecution, deprived of their possessions, and honours, are exiles from their native country. Such are the consequences which a retributive providence connects with persecution! Are not these lessons to persecutors? Louis found it an easier matter to seat his grandson on the throne of Spain, than to crush a small religious sect. If, in an age of bigotry, under arbitrary government, under a monarch so powerful, and so enterprizing, the project proved so ruinous, and, at last, failed, can a person, who would now attempt the like, be judged in his right senses?

It is somewhat above a century since France discarded toleration; at that very time it was, that it got a legal footing here. Surely the blessings we

have, since, experienced, contrasted with the declining state in which that country has been, from the time of which I speak, will not induce us to exchange measures. Persecution is a dangerous expedient, it seldom fails to involve in odium, and ruin those who practise, and to ensure the triumph of those who feel it. Are those who lost hundreds and thousands in the famous Birmingham riot, less dissenters? Will their posterity be the poorer? Where then is the use of persecution? What an idea of human affairs does persecution give? Practise persecution, and you declare that force is to controul sentiment; that the most powerful is invested with the prerogative of infallibility, with the right of suppressing truth, and setting up error? It condemns every attempt to set right by reasoning, it introduces into a civilized age the maxims of one that is barbarous, and must, quickly, bring on that state itself. Freedom of speculation having been so long allowed, the numbers of those who think is increased in vast proportion, and discordance of opinions, a hundred-fold increased. The causes, for which persecution was wont to be practised, are prodigiously accumulated, and the objects to which it should apply, exceed calculation. The project of uniformity of sentiment, always vain, it must now argue madness to set on foot. When the fires of Smithfield were lighted, under our Bloody Mary, there were in the kingdom perhaps not more than two or three sects, but, now, how numerous, and
among

among the members of one sect, how endless the differences of opinion! Hence, wise men have, long, agreed that, in the commerce of life, we should regard men's virtues, and not their sentiments.

But what do I behold in surveying the conduct of some men? Clamouring against reforms, they are engaged in attempts to bring on revolutions, attempts every way most mischievous, mischievous from their failure, and still more so from their success. The men I refer to, are those who would put a stop to enquiry, bridle discussion, arrest the spirit of investigation, convince by fines, and confute by imprisonments. But if they go through with their work, if they do it to any purpose, they must burn our libraries, break in pieces our instruments of science, destroy the proud apparatus of human knowledge, the mighty artillery of truth and reason, wreak their vengeance on the press, make it death to cast a letter type, deface our monuments of art, command traffic to cease, despoil of his wealth the merchant and manufacturer, hang up the men of letters, bury in oblivion the names of the advocates of freedom, of all who have presumed to write upon government, teach the rising generation to regard as demons the Hampdens, Sydneys, and Montesquieus of former times, reduce the multifarious classes which modern licence has suffered to spring up, to the two ancient venerable divisions of lords and vassals, build up the castles of the gentry and barons, and restore, in all its perfection, the lovely system

system of feodality, and the charming age of chivalry. They must assert, and maintain, that in an enlightened age, false principles may get the better of true; besides, that they may carry the day when they have to struggle against superior learning, against the weight of public opinion, the hope of honours and emoluments, and the mighty arm of authority. I could wish they would favour us with disquisitions shewing how all this may happen. But power deigns not to reason.

But, gentlemen, suppose persecution were to make dissenters conform, you will not say that the conversion will be the result of conviction, their principles they will carry within the church pale. Their political opinions, if really dangerous, will they become less so in consequence of this reconciliation? Will they have fewer opportunities to propagate them, and will they make the attempt with less effect?

Many affect to despise the dissenters, and make light of driving them to emigrate; but the effects of the emigration will be felt. A set of men, bound, from their situation, to greater virtue, having no way to rise to affluence, or consideration, but by their industry, having high notions of liberty, tempered by a love of law, and order, will be missed. Britain is, as yet, great; but what is great is made up of little parts, the removal of one of the parts may affect the whole more than we may
be

be aware of; it may injure and deform more than we may be willing to suppose. Besides, gentlemen, as members of the community, what advantages will you derive from it? When all rivalry is removed, will the clergy be more assiduous in the discharge of their duty, more circumspect in their conduct, abound more in learning and science? Will the virtues of candour, and mutual forbearance, so necessary in society, flourish more? Will cultivators feel less inconveniences from the present mode of supporting the clergy, will the faithful more venerate their pastors, will the great popular sects more readily consent to have the ministers of their choice silenced, and better relish compulsory laws to attend church? Indeed, taken in every point of view, an instance of more complete folly, of more mischievous, and weak policy, will be, in vain, looked for in the records of ages. If dissenters, or others, have fallen into political errors, I cannot see the wisdom of aggravating the errors, or irritating the persons, nor that of alienating them from the constitution. It seems, now, at least, possible, that a great republic may be established in our neighbourhood, and then the spirit which, at present, so obstinately opposes reforms, may burst forth in the contrary direction, still distinguished by its present attributes of unreasonableness, and impel to measures that will compromise the happiness of the present generation. But whatever turn things may take, in union there can be no harm, and the
co-operation

co-operation of no man, or of no body of men, of good intentions, is it wise to flight.

Pardon me, my Lord, this digression. I now return to your Lordship,

And am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Miscellaneous Observations.

MY LORD,

THOUGH various degrees of success influence the judgments of men, increase, or diminish the fervency of their zeal, yet these affect not principles themselves, neither make them better, nor worse. In the times of the reformation there were who censured the turbulence of the leaders in that business, who, when they saw the flames of war spread, and the fires of persecution lighted up, reprobated the cause in which they were engaged; but they were men of shallow minds, whose range was narrow, who saw but a little way before them.

Such

Such there, now, are, who, because indiscreet, and bad men disgrace good principles, take occasion to calumniate the principles themselves. People in a state half enlightened, are incapable of preserving the due medium. They always fly into extremes. At one time transported with the love of liberty, they became impatient of subordination; at another, fearing anarchy, they encourage the strides of despotism. The first stages of the revolution in a neighbouring kingdom roused numbers to a love of liberty, who connected with liberty, advantages which even liberty does not ensure. Of little value is this birth-right of man, except individuals possess virtuous, and industrious habits. It can only favour these, give full scope to their operation, but cannot supply the want of them, or connect the effects that flow from them with their contraries. The untoward turn which the affairs of that country have, since, assumed, the excesses there committed, little minds have connected with liberty; hence liberty itself is become obnoxious to them. By them it never is considered how little of the blame is to be laid to her charge; never have they reflected that the thousands who emigrated retained great influence in the country from which they fled, that they, their friends, foreign despotic powers, were interested to render that empire the scene of all that was disgraceful, that success in this way would serve them far more than the most brilliant triumphs in the field. The parties who thus plotted were well

well versed in intrigue, for it had been their principal business. The end being so laudable, as to the means they were above feeling scruples. In their pay they would have persons to assume every character, to appear under all masks, and they had a people to practise upon, to the last degree, venal. Ardour, and enthusiasm do wonders in opposition to open attacks, but against those of the kind above described, they are frequently worse than unavailing, even assist the designs they aim to overthrow.

The bulk of men never stop to enquire in what degree the excesses in question are owing to such causes as the King's flight to Varennes, to the double dealing he was persuaded to practise towards the nation, to the treaty of Pilnitz, to the manifestoes of the Duke of Brunswick, the hostile preparations, and the officious interferences of foreign powers. But for these the limited monarchy set up in 1791, would still have existed, and the alliance with England and Prussia, which its supporters sought, would have secured its permanence.

To reflections of this kind the multitude is unaccustomed. Of the superficies it judges, but beneath it looks not. Hence it has connected with liberty all the evils which France suffers, with reforms the most partial, revolutions the most complete, and with revolutions the overthrow of religion, insecurity of property, and mob government.

Men,

Men, who have this train foremost in their minds, no reasonings can induce, to favour accessions to liberty, to be concerned in any thing, the object of which, is its security. Sooner than do this, it should for them, utterly, perish. Hence, liberty, heretofore, wont to excite in British hearts the liveliest throbs, is regarded coolly. It is no longer the sound that makes the eyes sparkle, and the heart palpitate. The dame once admitted into closest embrace receives but distant homage. But, Britons, still suffer her to continue an inmate, you, and she, cannot live separate. Her value is inestimable. Few of you know how much it is you owe her. May her loss never furnish you with the information!

A political epidemic is, at the moment, abroad, but it cannot last. Lovers of liberty, you have only to lie still; let time do its work, and it will restore the patient. Though another nation disgrace liberty, and continue so to do, I know there is among us a set of men, and a considerable one I trust, who never will abjure their fealty to freedom, who are emulous of those brave persons who have given character to the people of these realms, who have been her steady votaries, who have written, pleaded, bled, and died for her, who are sensible of all their obligations to her, who are aware that all that exalts, polishes, and dignifies man, flows from her. Where did commerce most flourish, where originated the most beneficial enterprizes, where did genius unfold itself, where

where did industry perform its wonders ? Why has Britain, long, been the envy of nations, the flower of kingdoms, the pride of Europe ? This has been owing to your exertions, illustrious defenders of liberty ! Respected still be your memories ! While episcopal humility might have presented this sacred treasure as an offering at the foot of the throne, while clerical ambition might have bartered it for benefices, and courtiers, through complaisance, have yielded to encroachments upon it, ye stood forth its firm defenders ; but for you, traduced by those whom ye benefited, as your successors now are, we might have had a government as despotic as that of Turkey, intolerance as rank as that of Spain. We admire your conduct, we would imitate the example you have set us.

Amid the succession of painful events which the history of the two last years records, amid the clamour which stuns, the violence which bears down, knowledge, be assured, has not moved retrograde, nor hath she stood still. Men may fear, but they know ; they may take up with the delusion, but they see through it. The process which ameliorates the condition of the unborn, is going on. It is true, principles untried in their operation, have produced dreadful explosions, and apparatus constructed with great skill, and labour, have burst. Nevertheless the experience, whether too dearly purchased, I shall not, here, attempt to ascertain, is not without its use. The charm which
enthusiasm

enthusiasm nurtured is dissolving, the chain which superstition fabricated, is enfeebled; every absurd custom totters, spells are losing their force, and the oracles no longer give answers. Truth extends her empire, the reign of reason is only hindered by the force which misled ignorance puts forth against its own interests. All is well. In the universe there is a beneficent ruler. In the moral, as in the physical world, the best principles operate. Improvements are going on, and we should, as much, dread to precipitate, as to retard them. These, the philosophic sons of freedom would not hasten, lest they should injure. Nought can hinder them from practising the virtues which belong to liberty. Though they see the best principles daily trampled upon, they may cultivate them within their own bosoms; though the season be inauspicious, they may merit the eulogium, "they were worthy of better times!"

I am far from wishing to depreciate the good enjoyed in this country, and under this constitution. I know it to be very considerable, and I happen to be so situated as to see little else. Yet the class of the distressed, though it comes little under my observation, or under that of many others, is great; the accounts which make the heart of humanity ache are upon the increase, misery extends its dominions, and distress its empire. Still the best remedy will be found in gradual reforms, legally pursued. Let not men of genius and learning be discouraged,

discouraged, by the untoward appearance which things, at present, wear; let them continue to labour; though they may vary the means, let the object be still kept in view. Let us employ ourselves in disseminating principles of virtue, and philanthropy, and posterity, perhaps, may witness the pleasing sight of those who benefit by impositions, laying open the fallacy, of those who profit by corruption, proposing their removal, of those who reap advantage from burdensome institutions, recommending their amendment, of the rich man laying aside his pride, and the poor man his envy, and the love of kind, triumphing over that of self. To many, this is fairy language, as extravagant as encomiums upon chivalry, but let it be remembered that we live in times in which he who predicts what, may appear wild, must not, on that account, be deemed a false prophet. If such dispositions prevail, then may the lover of his species wishfully contemplate beneficial changes, then may the views of the patriot be promoted, without injury to the feelings of the man. Though I love liberty, and deem it invaluable, yet had I rather bend under the most grievous yoke, wear the most galling chain, than be concerned in the measures of bloodshed, of late, so much given into, in our neighbourhood. Surely, if beneficence predominate in the universe, the improvement of mankind may be carried on by other means. But it may be, that providence, while it lays a foundation for the good of future generations,

generations, punishes a sinful people for their past iniquities.

My Lord, I have detained you longer than I intended. It may, somewhat, plead my excuse, when I assure you that, most probably, it is the last time of your hearing from me. Your ghostly relation to this part of the world ceasing, I intend to give you no further trouble. Any thing of a general nature, worthy of notice, I apprehend we are not to expect from you. You have reached one of the situations whence things of that kind are seldom known to proceed.

The sentiments of respect that might be expected from a correspondent, I cannot profess, because I do not feel. A lover of free enquiry, a friend to the progress of reason, a well wisher to the improvement of my species, I can only entertain the reverse of respect for the man who has employed his talents to oppose these objects so interesting to the philanthropist; who, after attempts to mislead men's judgments, is now practising upon their passions, and endeavouring to turn the general indignation against those whom he, once, undertook to refute by argument. Hoping the period is not far distant, when you must change your conduct, discover a different temper, or lose all weight with the public.

I remain,

My Lord, &c.

NOTE (A.)

Creeds, and Confessions, the fertile sources of contentions, and disputes, have overset religion. Busy about circumstantialia, we have neglected the main subject, quarrelling about the shadow, we have suffered the substance to vanish; it is true the skeleton yet remains, but what is become of the spirit? Let politicians take warning from divines, let them beware of splitting on the same rock! See the low estimation in which religious institutions are held, bring not the political into the same predicament. Set up no vain state orthodoxy, raise no device of man above its proper rank, do not ask men to swear to the absolute perfection of the admired fabric of the British Constitution: let those who act under it, fulfil their parts with uprightness, and ability; let its blessings speak its praises, produce these as proofs of its excellence. Allow Rome to illustrate the nature of infallibility, France to exemplify the amiableness of fraternity, by fines, imprisonments, confiscations, and death, but use arguments more worthy of the subject, to prove the excellence of the British Constitution, let the above odious particulars make no steps in the demonstration! Oh, distant be the day, remote the period, when the government of Britain shall need such supports, descend every curse on the head of the men that shall propose them! In government, as in philosophy, or morals, let theory be open to free discussion. Disgrace not politics by articles of faith. Leave it to every man, as heretofore, to pursue, and to promulgate his speculations, throw in his way no detriment, subject him to no inconvenience, set up no tests as conditions of political security, and favour, besides private virtue, obedience to the laws, and submission to lawful authority, and the seditious, and disaffected will disappear. Attempts to shackle discussion, in an age like this, are pregnant

nant with danger ; no government can embark in them but with imminent hazard, but with the certainty, if it carries its point, of sinking its subjects into torpor, and servility, of reducing them to insignificance, of implanting the seeds of degeneracy in the breasts of men of all classes, and of all orders. May we not live to see the time when that influence which destroys what it cannot controul, shall reach every description of citizens, and every case of private life ! Kind providence, guard us from this pernicious demon, may we oppose his strides, and be on our guard against his wiles ! The fears, here, intimated, may be those of ignorance, heaven grant they may, but they are, also, those of honesty. On other grounds I am little anxious for the palm, but on that of disinterestedness I will yield it to none. Let what changes will happen, be it my lot to enjoy privacy, be it my business to practise virtue, and to seek knowledge. May situations of affluence and splendour ever display to me as few charms as they do at this moment. I am not without ambition, but it is not of the kind that directs to the little guises that so generally dazzle, and impose ; which, nevertheless, as they subserve the good of society, are to be regarded with respect. If the solicitude of others goes entirely to acting parts, may it be mine to excel as a man. The learned prelate, the profound judge, the skilful physician, the brave soldier, the expert man of business, what are they to the virtuous, and accomplished person ? Official eminence it is laudable to seek, but it is not the noblest ; it entitles to respect, but confers not that of the highest kind. To direct ambition to a different, and less agitated channel, is not, I presume, to disserve society. My prayer to God is, the happiness of my species, the prosperity of my country, the increase of her enlightened sons, the perpetuity of such eminent attainments, and shining qualities, as distinguish those of which she can, at present, boast.

Should

Should Britons ever be so far enervated as to favour the project of one religion, as a remedy to the evils arising from jarring opinions, to court the dulness, and languor, inseparable from uniformity of faith on subjects of theology, and policy, should a dissenter, no longer, find his residence in the country comfortable, then to quit it will be no penance, for we may be certain that its glory is departing, its decline upon the advance, and its downfall not distant. But cease such thoughts. Britons, by your union, dispel their gloom; unite, and you will see your true interests, and pursue them without fear, and distrust of one another. Men, of good intentions, of all parties, listen not to violent spirits, enjoin silence upon them, favour the return of moderation, shew a disposition towards cordiality. For a time, let the questions that divide us, sleep. In order to a final decision, call them up at a more calm, and tranquil period; the present is, in every view, unfit for the business. This advice, it is easy to give, and it is easy to practise, if you will form the desire; but the good consequences, that would arise from following it, are incalculable. Why does not every good man say, *Let us try the experiment?*



THE END.